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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

This past week just flew by! Because of the holiday on Monday, I almost lost track of the days, and this issue may have been a day late! That, and losing all of last night waiting for a delivery from Sears (I broke down and bought a new tractor/rider mower) that was 4 1/2 hours late (a 9:30 p.m. delivery!!). It's been one of those weeks. But, the good news is the few off things that occurred couldn't over-shadow the pluses of my vacation!

You can tell that the summer is winding down - even unofficially. The kids are back in school, we closed the pool last weekend, the garden veggies are slowing, and the weather is cooling. I can live with that - we still have a couple of more weeks of summer, officially. And, October is usually a terrific month. Now if those pesky hurricanes stop erupting! What a year it's been for these nasties! Well, that's Mother Nature for you - nothing that can be done about these storms except to be prepared, and safe. Good luck to those of you who live in the Southeast!

I usually scan through Joe's editorial while putting together A-ONE each week. At times, like this week, we have similar thoughts and comments. This is one of those weeks. Joe, as you all know because you read A-ONE regularly, spends a lot of time in the Atari newsgroups. Like Joe, I also visit these groups almost daily. Well, this week, we learned of the untimely death of Dennis Vermeire, a longtime online vocal member. While I didn't know Dennis personally, I do recall countless messages by him in those newsgroups. He was at times critical, but more often than not, highly supportive of the Atari userbase. He was one of those guys who tried to help out a fellow Atari user whenever he could. He was an A-ONE subscriber, and occasionally would send me some news bits for the magazine. We chatted occasionally via e-mail, but nothing memorable other than he would always respond to my messages. For that, and his presence in the online community, I'll remember him fondly. With Dennis' passing, the Atari community grew a little smaller.

Until next time...

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Eiffel 1.0.8 Update

Hi,

There are a new version of Eiffel on my site:
http://aniplay.atari.org

These interface handle all PS/2 Keyboard and mouse:

* Keyboard with 102 or 105 keys and more with the set 2 (AT) or the set 3 (PS/2).
* Since v1.0.7 the keyboard can work without driver and you can build your tables.
* Mouse up to 5 buttons.
* Mouse single and double wheel (IntelliMouse).
* Compatible with ALL Atari computers range (ST, STF, STE, MegaST, MegaSTE, TT and Falcon).
* Two Atari standard joysticks support DB-9.
* Motor command for ventilator and temperature sensor.
* Near all IKBD supported (only IKBD_SET_MOUSE_THRESHOLD, IKBD_SET_FIRE_BUTTON_MONITOR and IKBD_CONTROLLER_EXECUTE are not supported).
* Updating eiffel capabilities from GEM application EIFFELCF.APP.

Eiffel firmware v1.0.8 update:

* The tables Shift and AltGr inside the flash (program memory) can be used with 50 main characters of the set 2:
0x07 (F1), 0x0E, 0x0F (F2), 0x11, 0x12, 0x13 (><), 0x15 (AQ), 0x16 (1), 0x17 (F3), 0x1E (2), 0x1F (F4), 0x24 (E), 0x25 (4), 0x26 (3), 0x27 (F5), 0x2E (5), 0x2F (F6), 0x36 (6), 0x37 (F7), 0x39 (ALTGR), 0x3A (,M), 0x3D (7), 0x3E (8), 0x3F (F8), 0x41 (;,), 0x45 (0), 0x46 (9), 0x47 (F9), 0x49 (:.), 0x4A (!/), 0x4C (M;), 0x4E ()-), 0x4F (F10), 0x52 (ø'), 0x53 (*\), 0x54 (^[), 0x55 (=), 0x56 (F11), 0x57 (PRTSCR), 0x59, 0x5B ($]), 0x5E (F12), 0x5F (SCROLL), 0x62 (PAUSE), 0x65 (END), 0x6D (PAGEDN), 0x6F (PAGEUP), 0x76 (VERRN), 7F (SLEEP), 80 (POWER), 81 (WAKE), 0x8B (WLEFT), 0x8C (WRIGHT), 0x8E (WAPP).
Eiffel can work without driver for the sets 2 and 3!
* Inside the tables with the scan-code + 0x80, a status frame is send with 0xF6 0x05 0x00 0x00 0x00 0x00 0x00 scan-code
or 0xF6 0x05 0x00 0x00 0x00 0x00 0x00 scan-code+0x80 for the break code.
* It is preferable to use the status frames with EIFFELCF.APP or edit the .inf files for replace the scan-codes 0x54 to 0x5D because this codes was already affected by Atari for the functions keys F11 to F20 (SHIFT F1 to SHIFT F10).

Regards,

Didier.

--
Didier MEQUIGNON  Aniplayer download: http://aniplay.atari.org

Address: 25,rue de l'Ascenseur 62510 Arques FRANCE
Atari FALCON 030/CT60 105 MHz 270Mb/13Gb ~ iMac 500Mhz 320Mb/20Gb

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'll tell you right off the bat that this is going to be a short column. My intro will be somewhat shorter than usual too.

Other than telling you to get your lazy butt out and register to vote, I don't have a lot to say this week. These hurricanes have beaten the heck out of the southeast, have inconvenienced the mid-atlantic states, and have made it uncomfortable for us here in the northeast. I've read a few articles recently that say that we can expect more of these large, strong hurricanes in years to come.... not necessarily this season, but the next and the next and maybe even the next. Even though I've always been a strong proponent of the idea that seemingly small changes could have huge consequences, I've never been a 'Chicken Little', yelling to anyone who would listen that the sky is falling. I believe that our presence and actions have had a hand in the climate changes we're now seeing, but I also believe that we've still got a chance to, if not reverse the changes, at least mitigate them.

On a sad note, just before I sat down to begin putting this column together I was pointed to a message in the NewsGroup from Martin Byttebier. Instead of telling you myself, I'll let his post do it for me:

"Today I received some sad news about Dennis Vermeire. It seems he died on 19 mai. This explains his absence on this newsgroup.

May his soul rest in peace."

If you've visited the NewsGroup any time in the past 10 or so years, you've probably read at least a few of Dennis' posts. I don't have any details about the circumstances, but please take a moment as a respectful gesture. I would like to point out that showing respect doesn't necessarily mean agreement or support. In the final analysis, respect is the ultimate goodbye. There is no more important testimonial, nor a more telling rebuttal than respect. If more of us believed and practiced that, we'd all be much better off.

Okay, now let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

Sam F. asks for a tip or to on re-casing his Falcon:

"Where can I get a 2.5' to 3.5' ide ribbon cable? Also, There is only one ide channel available on the Falcon's mb, correct? So that would mean that only 2 ide devices can be controlled from there, correct?"

Ronald Hall tells Sam:

"Wizztronics sells a little board that allows the use of 3.5" IDE drives if you'd rather go that route - then you can use the original 2.5" drive along with a 3.5" drive, or 2 3.5" drives. It costs something like $39.95.

By the way, its plug and play, no soldering - plugs into the Falcons original HD header."

Greg Goodwin asks:

"If I may enquire, why is this board necessary?  Since the IDE standard allows for two drives, most PC/Mac setups appear just to have a cable with two connectors."

Ronald Hall tells Greg:

"Hmm, don't know - will a stock Falcon support a combination of a 2.5" drive and a 3.5" drive, or 2 3.5" drives by itself, just using a cable? I guess thats the question."

Mark Duckworth adds:

"Any good computer store has them but they are hard to find.  Sometimes they are a plastic block with a 2.5" connector on one side and 3.5" on the other side, and sometimes they are a little circuit board thinger. If you have a Microcenter near you, they have them.  Also mom and pop style computer stores tend to have them.  PS: If you run upon really tough luck, I have an extra one I'll likely never use in this lifetime that you can have."

Raoul Teulings asks for help with his Wacom tablet:

"Is anyone familiar with using a Wacom tablet with MagiC, Nova drivers for the Nova card, NVDI etc.? I just connected one and it seems that after restarting my TT it gets into a loop. After deleting all the Wacom prg. files it gets back to normal but i am eager to get the tablet working....Any help on this one?"

Peter Schneider tells Raoul:

"I'm not too familiar with using it, but when I put ARTPAD.PRG into the AUTO folder and ARTPAD.ACC on my boot partition (e.g., root of C:), it works as it is to do.

I'm going to send you my XBOOT settings for use of the artpad by private mail. I hope it will help you a bit.

I find important to hook the artpad on the right jack, for my TT it's one of the slower ones (MODEM2 with 9.600 b/s), and the boot order of the AUTO folder..."

Mark Duckworth adds:

"I think my old roommate wrote the driver for this, Noah Silva.
He had it working under MagiC on a TT030 specifically.  I witnessed this.
Please check and see if the driver you have was written by him or someone
else."

Mark Bedingfield asks:

"Does anyone know anywhere the Lego Robotics kit might be available?
Second hand, new? Anything will do."

Lonny Pursell asks Mark if he's....

"Tried the lego online store? or ebay? or google?"

Mark tells Lonny:

"Not Lego online, but ebay and google naf all. Will have a look at the
Lego online thing. Thanks!"

Lonny adds:

"Amazon.com had 270 entries alone for lego, I assume half a dozen other
online dealers exists as well."

Mark replies:

"I think you misunderstood me. In the 1980/90's there existed a cartridge
and software for the ST. This allowed you to run a robot from your ST.
Simple enough really. Anyhow, I thought it would be cool to plug the ST
into the Tele and tinker with it. My 5yr old Daughter is getting into
lego atm( well I am again;-). I got 3 links in Amazon that refer to
this, and they are all books of course."

Lonny tells Mark:

"...they still make such things only now they require a pc.  No chance of
adapting these current ones?  I have seen open source projects for the
mac to support them. I think they are usb now days.

Good luck finding old stuff like that, ebay is the only place I have
found as a source for old lego kits and they were not cheap last I
looked."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Atari 'Anthology' and 'Flashback'!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Trekking Into New Territory!
Women Make Inroads With Games!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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## Atari to Reissue Scores of Old Games

Atari wants to take you back in time, and to get there, you can ride a "Centipede" or an "Asteroid," or bounce back and forth between the pixilated paddles of "Pong."

The video game company told The Associated Press on Tuesday it plans to reissue scores of its classic titles from yesteryear on a single disc that can be played on the game consoles Xbox and PlayStation 2.

"Atari Anthology" will feature 85 games and is scheduled to go on sale in November at a cost of about $20.

But it's only one of the nostalgia projects Atari will push into the market then. The second is Atari Flashback, a slightly miniaturized version of the old Atari 7800 from the mid-'80s. It will have 20 games built into it, including "Breakout," "Solaris," "Crystal Castles" and "Battlezone."

Flashback will sell for $45 and include a pair of old-school joysticks.

Atari isn't expecting its decades-old games to compete on a technical level, like "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City," "Halo" and "Madden NFL 2005" that feature colorful realistic graphics, fast-moving 3-D action and the freedom to roam at will.

Instead, the company is aiming at the nostalgia market.

"It's a time machine. You go back to your childhood and you play," Atari chief executive Bruno Bonnell said.

And for gamers who weren't even born when the first PlayStation appeared?

"The kids will think this is quick, this is fast to understand, and we don't need a manual to understand it," he added. "We're going after two generations."

Even "Pong," perhaps the most primitive of the games with its simple white

square bouncing across the screen, may still have some appeal.

"The more primitive the better. It shows that video games are not just about high-end graphics or sophisticated representation. It’s about the game-play, the challenge to the player," Bonnell said.

The "Atari Anthology" disc will offer new twists on the games, too: "trippy mode," which renders the graphics in psychedelic colors, and "time warp" and "double speed," which can alter the pace of on-screen action.

Besides its array of classic Atari 2600 and 7800 titles, the Atari Flashback console will include one previously unreleased game: "Saboteur."

Reissuing classic games in the modern consoles has become common over the years. "Sonic the Hedgehog" and its sequels from the early 1990s turned up on Nintendo’s GameCube, and the old martial-arts challenge "Street Fighter" series returned on PlayStation 2.

But those titles still look like science-fiction dreaming compared to the jumping dots and boxes of the old Atari games.

Still, there is a market for even those old games, and the Internet proves it: Countless sites offer free downloads of the programs for playing on PCs - leading to rampant bootlegging.

But Bonnell downplayed the impact bootlegging could have on sales for "Atari Anthology" and the Atari Flashback console.

"You’re right to say that a lot of them are bootlegged, and the code is not the right code, and the color is not the right color. But here we’re offering them ... and you don’t go through collecting the games on the Internet and being scared of the viruses that are going to pollute your computer at some point."

Despite their simple appearance, the games can be very difficult, he added - especially for people who are two decades out of practice.

"They are not easy to master," Bonnell said. "Some people believe that because they are old games they will finish them very soon. But I think people will be sweating to finish."

## Trekking Into New Territory

In a deal that underscores the convergence of Hollywood and games, a San Francisco start-up is expected to announce today that it will develop the first major online game based on Paramount Pictures’ "Star Trek" franchise.

Perpetual Entertainment will develop an online game where thousands of players could transport themselves into a virtual "Star Trek" universe for a monthly fee. The company is the brainchild of two former Electronic Arts executives, Joe Keene and Chris McKibben, who were involved in the early efforts to establish EA’s online games business.

Perpetual has negotiated a license with the owner of the "Star Trek" property, Viacom Consumer Products, and plans to release its game in 2007. The game will be an action-adventure game where players can explore all aspects of the "Star Trek" franchise, from the original "Star Trek" to

newer TV shows such as "Star Trek: the Next Generation" and "Deep Space Nine."

In addition, Perpetual is announcing today that it has raised $6.5 million in a venture financing round led by Softbank Capital. The company earlier raised $4.5 million from Mobius Venture Capital, Manitou Venture Capital and China's Chengwei venture firm.

It's unusual for video game companies to raise money from VCs, who generally don't like making risky, Hollywood-style bets. But online game companies such as Mythic Entertainment and Turbine Entertainment have been successful in raising VC money because of the attractions of the online model. Online games have the potential to attract loyal fan bases who pay monthly fees ranging from $5 to $13 a month. A hit game can be a profit machine.

The market for online games has exploded in Asia, with some games such as NCSoft's "Lineage" series garnering millions of subscribers. That hasn't gone unnoticed among movie studios, which view games as a way of finding younger audiences and generating more revenue from aging properties.

Craig Cooper, a partner at Softbank Capital in Newport Beach, said that U.S. broadband penetration in homes has reached more than 50 percent and that makes the time for investing in Perpetual ripe.

It's also rare for a Hollywood studio to trust a start-up company with a valuable entertainment franchise. But Keene and McKibben say they have assembled an experienced team of 20 people since founding the company in the spring of 2002. They say they have worked out detailed plans to make a successful "Star Trek" game and are also in the midst of creating another undisclosed online game.

"There are tens of millions of 'Star Trek' fans and tens of millions of gamers," Keene says. "That's a large potential audience. When we thought of potential franchises to pursue, 'Star Trek' was at the top of our list as an undervalued franchise."

There is some risk in the project since the 38-year-old "Star Trek" concept so far hasn't generated top-selling games and doesn't appeal to the youngest gamers. Viacom and its previous game partner, Activision, even got caught up in a lawsuit last July over the way Viacom was exploiting the Star Trek property. The suit isn't settled yet.

"It's fair to say the fan base doesn't feel that the community has been given very many good games," Keene says.

But Keene notes that others have had great successes with science-fiction properties in the online space. LucasArts and Sony Online Entertainment have snared hundreds of thousands of subscribers to their "Star Wars Galaxies" online game.

EA itself invested heavily in online games during the dot-com years but scaled back when the efforts, such as The Sims Online, didn't bear fruit as expected. But Keene says a start-up focused on networked games has a good chance at succeeding. Most of all, he says the game will focus on fun activities.

"You won't be killing rats all the time in the game," he says.

# Women Make Inroads in Video Game Industry

Jennifer Canada knew she was entering a boy's club when she enrolled in Southern Methodist University's Guildhall school of video game making.

There's one woman besides Canada; the other 98 students were all guys. She jokes the ratio may be great for dating, but she sometimes got lonely.

"It's really different," the 23-year-old Indianapolis native said. "I miss having a lot of women friends."

The $10 billion industry may have entered the mainstream, but with a few exceptions, the target audience for big-budget video games is the same as it ever was: teenage boys gripped with visions of dragons, space ships and voluptuous virtual babes.

It doesn't help that the number of women developing games is also low - less than 10 percent of all game developers, Guildhall executive director Peter Raad said. Men design games that appeal more to men.

"I believe it behooves the gaming industry to attract more women developers," Raad said. "Playing games is a primal human activity that knows no boundaries of geography, language or gender."

Organizers said the first Women's Game Conference, in Austin on Thursday and Friday, is a step toward changing some long-held assumptions about the sex of those who make and play games.

"Games are no longer just for geeks," said Laura Fryer, director of Microsoft Corp.'s Advanced Technology Group, which includes the company's Xbox (news - web sites) console. "Half of our population probably has an opinion about what should be in video games, but it goes unnoticed because we don't have a lot of women in the industry."

Many believe education is key to boosting the ranks of female video game makers. Because games require such a broad range of expertise, including artists, musicians and architects, it's really a matter of letting women know that they don't have to be programmers to work on games, Fryer said.

At SMU, Guildhall has partnered with the online female job recruiting Web site Mary-Margaret.com and the game review Web site WomenGamers.com to create what's believed to be the first video game scholarship for women in the nation. The scholarship will provide about $18,500, or half the cost of an 18-month certification program.

Canada, who enrolled at SMU after graduating from Rice University this year, said she was drawn to games, and namely "The Sims," because of her passion for architecture.

"The first game I played I pretty much took over someone else's computer playing it," she said. "I liked building houses. I liked decorating the house and using cheat codes to get tons of money so I could build bigger houses."

Many agree there needs to be more thought-provoking, story-driven games with more female lead characters and less carnage.

This month, the Europe-based Entertainment and Leisure Software Publisher's

Association published a report stating that women are one of the keys to broadening video games as mass market entertainment.

According to the Entertainment Software Association, about 40 percent of gamers are women. And experts say older women are big gamers online, though they tend to gravitate to casual time-passers like checkers, chess and Scrabble.

But that hardly means all girls despise shoot-em-ups like Quake.

Ismini Roby, co-founder of WomenGamers.com, said there's a stereotype that women are interested only in simple puzzles or card games.

"We don't all like pink, and we don't all like the same types of games," she said. "The reality is that women like a variety of genres. Saying differently is like saying all men like science fiction movies."

"The Sims" and "Myst," featuring a mix of social experimentation and archaeological detective work, are among the most popular games ever, largely because of their broad appeal with both sexes.

Yet the appetite for scantily clad women in games shows no signs of diminishing.

"The Guy Game" mixes video clips of scantily clad female spring breakers on the beach of South Padre Island, Texas. "Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude" pits you as a pathetic middle-aged man in a quest for female nudity.

Hugh Hefner and his Playboy empire is getting in on the act in two ways: "Playboy: The Mansion" debuts in November. And the magazine plans a special pictorial featuring the pixelated flesh of video game vixens such as the red-haired vampire "BloodRayne."

"Let's just face it, violence and sex are things that sell," Raad said.

That's why it's important, he said, for women to make games for women.

"Since making games is often entertainment and is fantasy, it caters to whoever the developer of that game is intended for," he said. "You just have different outlets."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

## Judge Won't Block Oracle Takeover Bid

A federal judge on Thursday rejected the government's bid to block Oracle Corp.'s $7.7 billion takeover bid for rival PeopleSoft Inc. on grounds that a combination between the business software makers would throttle competition in a narrow market niche.

U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker's 164-page decision provides a major boost to Oracle's hostile bid for PeopleSoft, which has repeatedly cited antitrust concerns as one of the primary reasons for snubbing its unwelcome suitor.

The Justice Department and 10 states, siding with PeopleSoft, brought an antitrust lawsuit here to block the bid nearly seven months ago. The suit, contested in a monthlong trial this summer, represented another dramatic chapter in a Silicon Valley soap opera starring Oracle's flamboyant CEO, Larry Ellison, and a feisty former subordinate, PeopleSoft CEO Craig Conway.

Pleasanton-based PeopleSoft has rebuffed Oracle buyout offers four times in the past 15 months, but the company now may find it more difficult to resist its relentless rival now that Walker has removed the antitrust hurdle.

Since the antitrust case began nearly seven months ago, PeopleSoft has become more vulnerable because of a sales slowdown that has decimated its profits and stock - a phenomenon that figures to make Oracle's $21-per-share offer more appealing to many investors. PeopleSoft has blamed its disappointing performance on customer anxieties that were aggravated by the highly publicized trial.

PeopleSoft's shares rose 46 cents to close at $17.95 on the Nasdaq Stock Market before Walker released his ruling, then surged $2.65, or nearly 15 percent, in extended trading. Oracle's share gained 7 cents to close at $9.93 on the Nasdaq, then added 11 cents in extended trading.

## Wireless Technology to Rival Cable, DSL - Intel

An emerging wireless communications technology called WiMAX, which can blanket entire cities with high-speed Internet connections, will rival DSL and cable as the preferred way to connect homes and businesses to the Internet, Intel Corp. said on Tuesday.

"I think that WiMAX could be to DSL and cable what cellular was to landline (phones) not too long ago," Intel President Paul Otellini said at a technical conference hosted by the Santa Clara, California-based company.

Intel has begun shipping samples of WiMAX chips to customers and has committed to building WiMAX into its Centrino notebook computer chips starting in 2006, Otellini said.

The company stands to profit if customers also back WiMAX, since Intel likely would become a lead supplier.

Intel's embrace of Wi-Fi, another wireless technology with a much smaller range, made wireless connectivity nearly a standard feature in portable PCs. Otellini said WiMAX shares many attributes with Wi-Fi, including low cost, that could make it a runaway hit as well.

Taking heat from Wall Street over continuing product delays and a disappointing revenue forecast, Intel found refuge this week in the company of 5,500 technology developers assembled at the show, called the Intel Developer Forum.

Hardware developers and software writers play a key role in Intel’s future. Intel once focused on the narrow goal of building the fastest PC chips at the lowest possible cost, but its future depends more on convincing customers to build its chips into a new wave of consumer electronics devices, cellular phones, and mobile computers.

In addition to the wireless communications capabilities, Intel has promoted an anti-piracy technology called DTCP/IP, which protects content sent over home networks from theft.

Intel pushed to have the technology built into the Windows operating system, and sent "legions" of lawyers to movie studios to convince them to offer films to online services, Otellini said.

With the technology developed and the support received from content owners, Otellini said, Intel now hopes to profit from a new series of devices called "entertainment PCs," which stream movies and music to devices around the home, and have at their core the same Intel microprocessors that power home and business PCs.

Also at the show, Intel matched its rival, Advanced Micro Devices Inc., in showing off chips that have the power of two computers in a single package. Both companies have plans to introduce their first "dual-core" chips next year.

Separately, Intel said it had hired Eric Kim, the former head of marketing at South Korean technology giant Samsung Electronics, as its new vice president of sales and marketing.

Otellini told reporters the move was intended to bolster Intel’s push into supplying chips for consumer electronics.

## Judge Nixes Internet Child Porn Law in Pennsylvania

A federal judge threw out on Friday a Pennsylvania law requiring Internet service providers to block Web sites containing child pornography, saying the tools to do so also cause "massive suppression" of constitutionally protected speech.

Enacted in 2002, the law gave Pennsylvania’s attorney general the power to require that companies like America Online Inc. block customers from viewing Web sites the state had identified as containing illegal content.

No one challenged the state’s right to stop the distribution of child porn, which is already illegal under federal law, but lawyers for the Center for Democracy and Technology and the American Civil Liberties Union had argued that the technology used to block those Web sites was clumsy.

Much as the phone company can’t control what people fax over phone lines, ISPs can’t control content on the Web, and efforts to use sophisticated filters to stop people from seeing illicit sites have proven problematic.

Over two years, the groups said, ISPs trying to obey blocking orders were forced to cut access to at least 1.5 million legal Web sites that had nothing to do with child pornography or even legal pornography, but shared Internet addresses with the offending sites. When a service provider

blocked the address for a child-porn site, it wiped out the entire cluster.

U.S. District Judge Jan E. DuBois agreed the law could not be enforced without also blocking protected speech.

"There is little evidence that the Act has reduced the production of child pornography or the child sexual abuse associated with its creation," DuBois wrote. "On the other hand, there is an abundance of evidence that implementation of the Act has resulted in massive suppression of speech protected by the First Amendment."

Lawyers for the state had argued the technology exists for ISPs to block selectively and blamed Internet companies for not wanting to upgrade their systems. The state said ISPs were making business decisions by choosing to go the cheaper, easier route of blocking thousands of sites sharing the same Internet addresses.

Equipment is indeed available to shut down individual sites, but experts say such costly technology would force smaller ISPs out of business and larger ones to spend tens of millions of dollars on a weapon effective only until the peddlers of online kiddie porn change tactics.

The law had called for maximum fines of $30,000 and seven years in prison. Pennsylvania is so far the only state to pass such a law, though Maryland, New Jersey and Oklahoma have considered similar legislation, said Alan Davidson, associate director of the Center for Democracy and Technology.

"This should send a strong signal (to other states) that this entire approach to regulating the Internet is flawed," Davidson said.

Larry Frankel of the ACLU’s Pennsylvania chapter said the ruling shows that legislators need a clearer understanding of how the Internet works; and the inherent pitfalls in trying to restrict certain chunks of it without violating free-speech rights.

Sean Connolly, spokesman for Attorney General Jerry Pappert, said officials would review the 110-page ruling before deciding whether to appeal.

"This law was designed to block access to child pornography sites," Connolly said. "We believe it has worked well in Pennsylvania."

At the federal level, the Supreme Court has rebuffed Congress’ attempts to ban or restrict adult-oriented Web sites, though it endorsed a law requiring schools and libraries receiving federal funds to use filtering software to block pornography, not just child porn.

Arkansas, South Dakota and South Carolina require ISPs or computer technicians to report any child pornography they discover, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

## Altnet Fights Back, Sues RIAA

The litigious Recording Industry Association of America is involved in another legal dispute with a P-to-P technology maker, but this time, the RIAA is on defense. Altnet filed a lawsuit this week accusing the RIAA and several of its partners of infringing an Altnet patent covering technology for identifying requested files on a P-to-P network.

The lawsuit is the next step in a campaign Altnet launched in November 2003, when it sent cease-and-desist letters to a number of companies, including those it is now suing. Joining Altnet, based in Woodland Hills, California, as plaintiffs in the suit are Brilliant Digital Entertainment, Altnet's parent company; and Kinetech, a patent holding company that developed the technology in question and exclusively licenses it to Brilliant and Altnet.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, alleges patent infringements by the RIAA, Overpeer, Loudeye, Media Sentry, and four executives at the RIAA and Loudeye.

Overpeer, which Loudeye acquired in March, and Media Sentry sell antipiracy products. Altnet's lawsuit alleges that the two companies, at the behest of the RIAA, flood P-to-P networks like Kazaa with "spoof" files that appear to be the files users have requested but which are instead damaged or otherwise counterfeit. Altnet, a close partner of Kazaa maker Sharman Networks, charges that the methods Overpeer and Media Sentry use to match their files with those sought by users infringe the Kinetech patent.

Altnet is seeking a permanent injunction barring the companies and executives it has charged from using file-matching technology covered by its patent. It also seeks compensation for monetary damages in an amount to be determined.

Altnet Chief Executive Officer Kevin Bermeister declines to estimate the extent of those damages.

"We're not really thinking about remedies and damages at this time," he says. "We have a lawsuit in front of us we have to present."

After its November barrage of warning letters, Altnet had discussions with some of the companies it targeted, but those talks did not lead to a resolution, Bermeister says.

Altnet's gripe with the RIAA goes back beyond its current dispute, Bermeister says. Altnet makes technology for legally distributing and licensing digital content through P-to-P networks. It would love to work with major music labels and other large content creators, but has been repeatedly rebuffed, Bermeister says.

"We've been very patient. This is going back now over three years. I've met with every single major-label executive over and over and over, but we haven't been able to obtain licenses from the majors," Bermeister says. "Every major has cooperated to ensure that we don't get licenses, and then, to top it off, this."

An RIAA spokesperson says the organization had not yet seen the complaint and therefore had no comment. A Media Sentry representative did not return a call for comment. Overpeer says it would fight the lawsuit.

"We vigorously deny these claims and find them to be completely baseless and without merit," Overpeer head Marc Morgenstern says in a written statement.

## Lexmark Recalls Laser Printers

Lexmark International is recalling 39,400 laser printers sold under its own name and under the IBM and Dell labels, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The printers, which were manufactured in China, were shipped between June and August 2004. They sold for about US$200 through office supply, electronics and computer stores, as well as the IBM and Dell Web sites.

The CPSC said consumers should immediately stop using the laser printers, unplug the units and contact the companies for a free replacement. Recall information is available from Lexmark at (877) 877-6218; Dell at (888) 245-3959; and IBM at (800) 426-7378.

## House Panel OKs Copyright, Spyware Bills

Hackers who secretly install "spyware" on others' computers and Internet users who copy movies and music without permission could face up to three years in prison under bills that advanced in Congress on Wednesday.

The House Judiciary Committee voted to enlist the government to a greater degree in the entertainment industry's fight against those who copy its products over the Internet.

The committee also voted to establish criminal penalties for those who install spyware on others' computers to commit identity theft or other crimes.

"We must not let Internet technologies become a haven for criminals," said Rep. Lamar Smith, a Texas Republican.

Under the wide-ranging copyright bill, Internet users who distribute more than 1,000 songs through "peer to peer" networks like Kazaa and Morpheus could face up to three years in prison.

People who secretly videotape movies when they are shown in theaters could also go to prison for up to three years.

The Senate approved similar bills in June.

But in a provision likely to anger Hollywood, companies that edit out sex and violence from movies to make them more "family friendly" would be immune from copyright suits.

Rep. Howard Berman, a Democrat whose Los Angeles district includes many entertainment companies, said that provision could potentially allow third parties to strip out commercials from television shows, or insert commercials of their own with impunity.

The recording industry has sued more than 3,000 individuals over the past year for copyright violations, but the Justice Department so far has only brought a handful of cases.

The bill would train agents to investigate intellectual-property crimes and set up a Justice Department program to educate the public about copyright rules.

Justice Department investigators would be able to send warnings to users they suspect of copying songs illegally, sending the messages to their Internet providers to pass along.

The recording industry issued similar warnings before it began suing individuals last fall.

Both the copyright bill and the spyware bill now head to the House floor for consideration.

The spyware bill could be combined with one passed by the Senate Commerce Committee earlier this year that would require software makers to notify people before loading new programs on their computers.

## Zombie PCs Spam, Phish, Harass On the Sly

Criminals deploy zombies herded into netwoks of a few hundred to more than half a million compromised PCs. Uses vary from the simply annoying (spam attacks) to the unsavory and criminal.

Denial-of service attacks. Zombie networks can be directed to swamp a targeted Web site with junk data, crippling the site. Crooks are increasingly using the threat of a denial-of-service attack to extort cash from online businesses keen to stay up and running.

Phishing scams. These scams trick people into typing account information on counterfeit Web sites. Zombies broadcast phishing spam; they also host the bogus Web sites that collect the stolen data. Do-it-yourself phishing kits now supply free spamming tools and bogus Web sites targeting popular online merchants and banks.

Spam splattercasts. Each zombie can broadcast hundreds of pieces of spam per hour. Generally this is a four-step process:

1. The attacker sends instructions for the attack to stepping-stone zombies scattered in different countries and time zones.

2. More powerful "server" zombies pass along the instructions over an IRC (Internet Relay Channel) that works like a private instant-messaging service.

3. Spam-relay zombies take the instructions, using the equivalent of a buddy list.

4. Each spam-relay zombie blasts out spam to hundreds of e-mail addresses, and then stops; this method keeps the source from being pinpointed and the end user from noticing significant Net or PC sluggishness.

## Floppy Disk Becoming Relic of the Past

Long the most common way to store letters, homework and other computer files, the floppy disk is going the way of the horse upon the arrival of the car: it’ll hang around but never hold the same relevance in everyday life.

And good riddance, say some home computer users. The march of technology must go on.

Like the penny, the floppy drive is hardly worth the trouble, computer makers say.

Dell Computer Corp. stopped including a floppy drive in new computers in spring 2003, and Gateway Inc. has followed suit on some models. Floppies are available on request for $10 to $20 extra.

"To some customers out there, it’s like a security blanket," said Dell spokesman Lionel Menchaca. "Every computer they’ve ever had has had a floppy, so they still feel the need to order a floppy drive."

A few customers have complained when they found their new computers don’t have floppy drives, but it’s becoming uncommon as they realize the benefits of newer technologies, Menchaca said. Almost all new laptops don’t come with a floppy.

More and more people are willing to say goodbye to the venerable floppy, said Gateway spokeswoman Lisa Emard.

"As long as we see customers request it, we’ll continue to offer it," she said. "We’ll be happy to move off the floppy once our customers are ready to make that move."

Some people may hesitate to abandon the floppy just because they’re so comfortable with it, said Tarun Bhakta, president of Vision Computers outside Atlanta, one of the largest computer retailers in the South.

At his store, the basic computer model comes with all necessary equipment, but no floppy.

"People say they want a floppy drive, and then I ask them, ’When was the last time you used it?’ A lot of the time, they say, ’Never,’" Bhakta said.

But plenty of regular, everyday computer users don’t want to let their floppies go.

"For my children, they can work at school and at home. I think they’re a pretty good idea," said shopper Mark Ordway.

"I just want something simple for me and my husband to use," said Pat Blaisdell.

The floppy disk has several replacements, including writeable compact discs and keychain flash memory devices. Both can hold much more data and are less likely to break.

Even so, floppies have been around since the late 1970s. People are used to them. They were the oldest form of removable storage still around.

"There’s always some nostalgia," said Scott Wills, an electrical and computer engineering professor at Georgia Tech who has held on to an old 8-inch floppy disk. "It’s a technology I’m glad to be rid of. I’d never label them, and I never knew what any of them were until I put them in and looked."

In a sense, it’s amazing floppy disks have hung around for this long.

They only hold 1.44 megabytes of space - still enough for word processing documents but little else. By comparison, CDs store upward of 700 megabytes, and the flash memory drives typically carry between 64 and 256 megabytes.

And it’s been a long time since floppy disks were even floppy. They used to come in a bendable plastic casing and were 5.25 inches wide, but Apple Computer Inc. pioneered the smaller, higher density disks with its Macintosh computers in the mid-1980s.

Then Apple become the first mass-market computer manufacturer to stop including floppy drives altogether with the release of their iMac model in 1998.

"It’s not officially dead, but there’s no question it’s a slow demise," said Tim Bajarin, principle analyst for Creative Strategies, a technology consulting firm near San Jose, Calif. "You had a few people ... who were screaming, but in a short time, they adjusted."

It may not be too many years before floppy disks are joined by DVDs. Microsoft founder Bill Gates recently predicted the DVD would be obsolete within a decade.

## Microsoft Puts Fingerprint Readers Into Hardware

Microsoft Corp. on Wednesday unveiled a new array of keyboard and mice, with some featuring built-in fingerprint readers to make it easier for users to log on to personal computers and Web sites.

A keyboard, mouse and stand-alone fingerprint reader were added to Microsoft’s hardware lineup, which works with software to verify and switch between users of its Windows operating system, as well as automatically enter the identifications and passwords needed to log onto secure Web pages.

In its annual refresh of its computer input hardware, the world’s largest software maker also introduced a new small wireless mouse designed for laptop computers and keyboards with a zoom slider bar to shrink or enlarge digital text or photographs.

Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft, which discontinued its hardware networking business earlier this year, said that it would continue to introduce new keyboard, mice and PC input-related products using technology derived in part from its $6 billion annual research and development efforts.

Hardware with built-in fingerprint recognition is expected to retail at between $55 and $110, while the wireless notebook mouse will sell for $45 and the keyboard with zoom for $35, Microsoft said.

Microsoft is not the first to introduce fingerprint recognition hardware. Sony Corp., Targus and other manufacturers also sell fingerprint readers to boost computer security, although Microsoft says its new hardware is more for convenience.

# Two Programs Rescue Damaged Discs

You know it’s bound to happen: One of the CDs you’ve burned is going to stop working - be it from scratches, aging, poor manufacturing or the fact that it was made with old software.

But don’t turn that disc into a drink coaster quite yet.

I was pleasantly surprised with two recovery programs I tested - the $39.50 BadCopy Pro and the $29.50 CDRoller. Both retrieved all files from two discs I’d given up on.

One was a CD-R burned using Hewlett-Packard Co.’s HP DLA software, which allows users to write files to a disc one at a time at leisure, unlike Roxio Inc.’s Easy CD Creator, which write entire data discs at once. DLA is convenient, but not so reliable, it turns out. My Windows XP computer refused to recognize the CD at all.

The other problematic disc was a CD-RW. Rewriteable discs are usually written with software similar in concept to DLA. Frustratingly, my computer could read some of its files some of the time, but I could never retrieve all of them.

In short, I suspect poor software, rather than scratches or other damage, for the malfunction of both discs.

Neither one fazed BadCopy Pro and CDRoller, however. The manufacturers say the programs work by communicating directly with the disc drive, bypassing the disc-reading software that comes with the Windows operating system. Almost any drive should work with either program.

The edge, however, goes to BadCopy Pro. CDRoller managed to retrieve all files from the CD-R, but not their file names, naming rescued files as File0001, File0002 and so on.

CDRoller is designed only for rescue operations on "packet-written" discs - CD-RWs, CD-Rs and their DVD equivalents written with "drag and drop" software like DLA.

BadCopy Pro claims it can also rescue some scratched discs, but it failed to get anything meaningful out of a disc I had scratched intentionally through the label. No doubt the severity of the scratch will make a difference.

Don’t expect a high standard of polish from either program. Both have clunky, mildly confusing user interfaces, as is common in software from small companies. They also work slowly.

But if you’re getting back files you thought were forever gone, you won’t mind.

On the Net:

BadCopy Pro: http://jufsoft.com

CDRoller: http://cdroller.com

## Virus Writer Hides Job Ad in MyDoom Net Worm

Times must be getting tough for computer virus writers.

Technicians at British anti-virus firm Sophos Plc said on Friday they had discovered a plea for work inserted deep in the lines of code for two new computer worm outbreaks, "MyDoom-U" and "MyDoom-V."

"We searching 4 work in AV (anti-virus) industry," read the message. Because it was inserted in the code, the message was only visible to anti-virus professionals.

While the calling card may have won the programmer points for creativity, the anti-virus community was not impressed.

"It’s hard to tell if the creators of these new versions of the MyDoom worm are being serious, but there is no way that anybody in the anti-virus industry would touch them with a barge pole," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos.

The latest MyDoom infections pack some power.

Spread via e-mail, MyDoom-U and MyDoom-V contain a file attachment that, when downloaded, infects a computer with a malicious "back door" that blocks access to most anti-virus Web sites and turns the computer into a spamming machine, sending out junk e-mails.

Sophos reported the latest MyDoom variants are not spreading rapidly - a bad sign for the would-be job seekers.

"It’s not surprising," Cluley said. "Many times virus writers are just poor programmers."

## New Technology Estimates Fast-Food Demand

Do you want fries with that? Never mind, we already know. A Pittsburgh startup, HyperActive Technologies Inc., is testing technology at area fast-food restaurants designed to give kitchen workers a good indication of what customers want before the hungry souls even get close enough to place an order.

The system, known as "HyperActive Bob," is in place in several restaurants around Pittsburgh in a primitive form: It tells employees when they are about to get busy, even how much food to put on the grill.

The system uses rooftop cameras that monitor traffic entering a restaurant’s parking lot and drive-thru. Currently, the system is all about volume: If a minivan pulls in, there’s apt to be more than one mouth to feed.

By this time next year, HyperActive Technologies expects to have in place software that keys on the type of vehicle entering the parking lot to determine whether the customers they bear are inclined to order, say, a burger over a chicken sandwich.

As it is, the currently installed technology - the predictive system is only running simulations for now - has wowed some seasoned veterans.

"I've been a manager for 28 years," said Pat Currie, a manager at a McDonald's in Chippewa Township. "It's the most impressive thing I've ever seen."

HyperActive Bob is now at seven area McDonald's, a Burger King and a Taco Bell.

It was installed at Currie's restaurant two years ago. Since then, waste has been cut in half and wait times at the drive-thru have been reduced by 25 to 40 seconds per consumer, Currie said - an eternity in the fast-food industry.

Profit margins for fast-food franchisees are built and busted in seconds. Store managers must calculate demand and make their best guess as to how long that window of demand will last.

If they underestimate either, the lines begin to form and it's too late - it's no longer fast food. If a manager overestimates, profits head for the trash along with food that has a very short shelf life.

It's not enough to know that your restaurant sells 120 burgers during the lunch hour on week days. Managers must know during which 20 minutes the kitchen will go into high gear during that hour and it's always a shifting target, Currie said.

"We can get 65 (orders) in the first 20 minutes," he said. "This allows us to cook very precisely."

The fast-food environment could be the perfect environment for recognition software because the limited menu increases the odds of predicting correctly, said Kerien Fitzpatrick, president of HyperActive.

And it doesn't have to be perfect for it to work, he said.

"Let's say we know that there's a Big Mac promotion and we know that if there are five cars in the drive-thru through in six minutes. We know that there is a 100 percent likelihood, based on collected data, that someone will order a Big Mac within the next three minutes," he said. "Each location is different and those decisions are partly based on whether there are minivans or cars, or pickup trucks, what has happened in the past, and what is going on in real time."

HyperActive Bob has a memory that bases future predictions on what it has learned at a particular restaurant, but it remains to be seen if the technology can be used in mass scale, Fitzpatrick said.

Company officials flew to Florida last week to set up the system at two more restaurants that serve far more meals than the ones near company headquarters.

Officials at McDonald's headquarters outside Chicago said franchisees have wide latitude in how to run restaurants, and said there are no plans as of yet to use HyperActive Bob on a larger scale.

"These are entrepreneurs who are always looking for ways to maximize efficiencies and they are very creative," said spokesman Bill Whitman. "Our franchisees have begun initiatives to run all of our restaurants better and

changed the menu with things like the Big Mac and the Filet-O-Fish."

The time it requires to train new hires has been reduced from three months to just over a week when using the system, Currie said.

"You can imagine the stress it takes off my people in the kitchen," he said. "I've got five people in there cooking all these different products and they're all yelling, 'I need this.' 'I'm down to two of these.' A lot of that is gone."

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